

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**
held on **28th April 2021** via Skype.

PRESENT:

Jon Swift (Chair).....AELCC	Paul Armour Dunbar Golf Course
Mark JamesCycling UK	Sue Kempson..... ELC Councillor
John McMillanELC Councillor	Andrew Ralton Scotways
Ken ReidIndependent co-optee	Thomas Stanley Landowners

ATTENDING:

Neil Clark.....ELC Countryside	Jill Mackay ELC Coms.
Nick MorganELC Countryside	

APOLOGIES:

Claire Grant.....National Trust Scot.	Francis Hepburne Scott . Scottish Forestry
Eamon John.....ELC SCL Manager	Constance Newbould..... BHSS
Iain Reid.....ELC Roads	James Wyllie NFUS

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 27th January 2021.

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed by Sue and seconded by Mark.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Nick had sent the link to the draft Land Management Rules consultation to Ken who had put a post about it on the LAF Facebook page.
- 2.2 No ideas have been sent in for walker and cyclist friendly roads, but Jon said that someone will be attending the next Dunspey Community Council meeting to talk about a proposal for a quiet road from Whitekirk to East Linton. He can report back at our next meeting.
- 2.3 Jon has written to Martin Andrews, the factor of Wemyss & March Estates to see if he would be interested in joining the Local Access Forum. He hasn't had a response yet.
- 2.4 Nick has been in touch the National Trust for Scotland to ask if they would still be able to be represented on the LAF. Claire Grant, the NTS' Operational Manager for Edinburgh has agreed to join the LAF, although she is unable to attend this meeting.

3. ACCESS ON GOLF COURSES

- 3.1 Paul Armour, the Course Manager from Dunbar Golf Club gave a talk about public access on the course.
- 3.2 Paul has been at Dunbar for five years, having previously worked at the Old Course, St Andrews. He has noticed an increased footfall year on year with more people coming in at the Deer Park site from the new housing.
- 3.3 It was even busier during the lockdown when the course was closed. The course was still being maintained, but people were walking on the greens possibly because the flags had been taken in, so they ended up fencing off the greens.
- 3.4 It is only the minority who stray off paths. It is good to see people out walking, so long as they are responsible.
- 3.5 Paul thinks that Gullane and North Berwick courses have more issues because people tend to cross them to get to the coast and there are a lot more people there. Dunbar is generally easier to manage, as there is just the John Muir Link running along the coast, but otherwise limited access.
- 3.6 The club understand that non-golfers may not know where golf balls may be coming from, so the course has signs asking walkers to follow the red posts along the side of the course.
- 3.7 Paul understands the need for golfers and walkers to respect each other. There have been occasions when he has had a word with golfers who he has seen being impatient with walkers.
- 3.8 The two main access issues that the Club have to deal with are people wanting to access the coast from the new housing at Newtonlees and to help they have put in a bit of path and signs a safer route. Also a number of surfers park their vehicles above the double yellow lines at Whitesands and cross the course to get to the coast. There have been two incidents added to the near-miss book here recently.
- 3.9 Various golf clubs in East Lothian keep in touch via twice yearly "Scotland's Golf Coast" meetings and a WhatsApp group. Paul suggested that it would be good to have consistent signage across all golf courses.
- 3.10 When asked about how much information is given to golfers about public access, Paul replied that e-mails have been sent to members to remind them of their responsibilities and that the Golf Pro explains about the right of way and access rights to anyone visiting the club.
- 3.11 Paul was thanked for giving the talk and for his proactive approach to public access on the course.

4. FACEBOOK

- 4.1 Ken reported that the Facebook page had been very active because of the proposal to share posts with the Countryside Rangers and East Lothian Council pages. These are all about responsible access and have averaged one post per fortnight since the last meeting. Topics covered have included keeping dogs under control, sheep worrying and lambs, dangers of ice, leaving gates as you find them, curtilage and privacy and responsible cycling on paths. Ken noted that most of the feedback recently has been very supportive.

- 4.2 Ken said that there are now over 500 people following the Local Access Forum page. The more likes a post gets the more available it becomes. One post has been seen by nearly 10,000 people.
- 4.3 Nick asked the members for any ideas they have for posts on responsible access.

5 ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE

This was circulated in advance of the meeting and Nick ran through it.

- 5.1 Nick has been in discussion with the owner of Clerkington Estate, west of Haddington about public access there. There has been a new housing development at Dovecot, adjacent to the estate where over 100 homes have been built and currently the land to the north is being built on, with 800 houses planned. As reported elsewhere there has also been an enormous increase in people walking during the Covid lockdown and an increase in anti-social behaviour. The landowner is hoping to apply for forestry funding to undertake some woodland thinning and then put in paths to help manage public access there. However, this is all going to take some time and it seems unfair that a housing development should cause so many issues for a neighbouring landowner.
- 5.2 In response to Thomas' question Councillor McMillan said that East Lothian Council is in early stages of preparing the Local Development Plan 2 and there will be opportunities for people to engage. Each Local Authority also has to contribute towards a Regional Spatial Strategy which will include proposed locations for development and green space. Information about the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4 can be found [here](#):
- 5.3 When discussing car parking at Hopes, it was noted that parking on road verges is an issue across Scotland and not exclusive to East Lothian. Often people park on verges when there is a carpark a short distance away. Neil highlighted similarities to what is happening along the coast. Although much of the coast is very sensitive habitat there are robust carparks and beaches. However, we are aware of issues in the Lammermuirs. If any member of the Forum is in the Lammermuirs Neil would welcome feedback on any busy locations, camping, fires and parking issues, etc.

6. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE

A summary of access issues was circulated in advance of the meeting.

- 6.1 The number of issues reported continues to be high, although many issues are repeats of those that have previously been sent in, in which case they are treated more as an enquiry and not recorded as an issue.
- 6.2 Ken had raised concerns about two locked gates he had come across when out walking. Nick assured him that these had been reported to the Countryside Ranger for the area, but other work commitments meant that she hadn't managed to check them yet. They won't be forgotten about, but we are struggling to get through the work and having to prioritise.
- 6.3 Nick had arranged for a pedestrian gate to be delivered to Fox Lake. The manager at Fox Lake was happy to install it, but he has reported that the landowner does not want it. He is trying to arrange a meeting with Nick about this.

- 6.4 Jon enquired about Dalkeith Estate. Neil said this has now been handed to the Legal Team to prepare a letter to the estate.

7. MEMBERS' UPDATES

- 7.1 Mark reported that there is a new Dunbar Community Cycle Club, which covers road and off-road cycling. He has noted a lot of people out cycling in recent months, all behaving! The East Lothian Cycle Forum hasn't met since the start of lockdown.
- 7.2 Councillor McMillan talked about an interesting paper to Council about ELC's response to the Covid crisis and Brexit. (*to be e-mailed with minutes*). He wanted to thank the Countryside Team for all of the hard work over the last year coping with increased numbers of visitors. He commended the Facebook posts on responsible behaviour and thanked all involved with them. He noted the police pop-up tent in Humbie the previous weekend. It was great to see so many cyclists around and the police reminded those in Humbie about gatherings and social distancing. He also said that he was delighted to hear that Jennifer Lothian had been appointed the Strategy, Policy and Development Manager with Amenity Services.
- 7.3 Andrew said that there is information on the Scotways website about small grants that are available to Scotways members for community projects. Also on the website is information about the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance manifesto for the outdoors. [SORA-Manifesto-2021.pdf \(scotways.com\)](https://www.scotways.com/SORA-Manifesto-2021.pdf) Also they held a husting event – Onslaught or Opportunity. This can be viewed via Scotways Facebook page.
- 7.4 Thomas said he was impressed by the Council's objective response to the increase in visitor numbers. He said that James Grant-Suttie was exploring whether he should provide a carpark at Balgone, to reduce the number of people parking on the verges
- 7.5 Jon reported that two members of Dunspey Community Council had been building and installing benches around the East Linton path network. So far they have put out 32 benches.
- 7.6 Neil reported that interviews for a new Countryside Rangers will be taking place in the next week.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Jon noted that the July meeting will mark two years of him being Chair of the Local Access Forum. We will need nominations for a new Chair prior to the meeting.

9. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 28th July 2021

Wednesday 20th October 2021

The meetings will be from 2pm until 4.30pm. It is likely we will have to continue to use Skype for meetings.